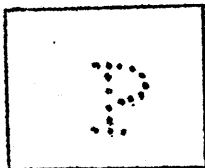


THE LAST CZECH PERFIN

By:

VOJTECH MAXA, #933



Many Perfin collectors in the United States have certainly seen the Czechoslovak Perfin "P" as shown to the left. However few will know that it belongs to a publishing house, "ORBIS," in Prague. Probably none realize that it is the only Czech Perfin still in use. The writer discovered the story in October 1970.

ORBIS was founded shortly after the First World War. Among other activities it imported foreign newspapers and magazines, and distributed them throughout all of Czechoslovakia. It also imported books and periodicals. Naturally, therefore, most United States collectors have acquired their "P" Perfin from these exports.

The firm continued during German Occupation, and the Perfin is to be found on the stamps of Bohemia and Moravia. However, after the Second World War, this firm was transformed into a state-owned corporation, although its activities remained the same. Therefore, we find this Perfin on most of the Czech stamps right up through Scott's #1034, which is the most recent one in the writer's collection.

A visit to ORBIS, and a talk with Director Deputy Mr. Nevrkla, revealed the present state of affairs. At the cash-desk of ORBIS, they still keep the original punching machine (maker unknown), whose die has remained unchanged since 1920. It is a single-head type machine and the pins have lost their original sharpness. Now, instead of punching out small round disks, they produce "pin-holes." Mr. Nevrkla was unable to explain just why ORBIS chose the "P" for their Perfin.

Most curiously, ORBIS isn't using the Perfin themselves anymore, but instead, it is used by an enterprise called "PNS" which is located in the same building. "PNS" is a newspaper-delivery-service, and is operated by the Post Office. It took over from ORBIS the import and export of periodicals, - and with this we come to the point. The PNS export department still uses Perfined stamps, uniquely, on all the parcels sent out of the country. The remainder of the mail is franked by a meter machine. To produce the Perfins, employes of the PNS borrow the old ORBIS machine!

As far as can be learned, the Perfin "P" is the only one still in use any place within Czechoslovakia. It is produced by a machine at least fifty years old, which protects the stamps of a firm to which it does not belong! All this serves to demonstrate that the stories behind Perfins are never dull and uninteresting.

The author hastens to assure his fellow-collectors in the United States that although the story of Czechoslovak Perfins is practically at an end, it is by no means an uninteresting one. Presently, we have been able to assemble and record over 570 different Czech Perfins and have been able to identify the users of about 150 of them. However, undoubtedly scores of Czech Perfins are still waiting for their discoverers. So, there is still plenty of interesting work, and considerable search remaining to be accomplished before it will be possible to compile a catalog of all Czechoslovak Perfins, and this is the writer's ultimate aim. This can only be accomplished with the help of many fellow collectors. We are most grateful to the many United States collectors who have already helped with this task, and thank them for their unselfish efforts.